

It has become increasingly difficult to present these annual reports in new and more invigorating ways. But it is important to evaluate the health of our church. And it is important for you as a congregation to know what your elders are working on and how to pray for the overall direction of Providence. It is my goal tonight to give praise and thankfulness for what God has done here and inspire enthusiasm in what we anticipate God to do in the near future. So to that end, I want to evaluate our position based upon our church's vision statement. Allow me to read it to you - 'Providence Baptist Church exists to declare the sovereign majesty of God through proclamation, exaltation and education, according to the revealed Word of God, to the ends of the earth, by His grace and for His glory.' So how are we doing in these three particular categories of proclamation, exaltation and education or God's sovereign majesty? Are we doing these ministries according to the word of God and are we intentional about going to the ends of the earth. Let me begin with proclamation- by proclamation we mean declaring God's glory through preaching, evangelism and missions.

In our preaching, it has been a significant year in the life of our church. We began the year by concluding the gospel of Luke and we took up the challenge of working our way through Nehemiah verse by verse. As of mid-December, we have had 26 sermons in Nehemiah. And lord willing, we shall have one more this weekend before concluding the book and moving on to 1 Thessalonians in the upcoming year. It has been our pattern to alternate between Old Testament and New Testament books. Over my tenure as pastor, I have preached verse by verse through 1 Peter, Nahum, Luke and now Nehemiah. I am looking forward to the first opportunity to preach before you from one of the Apostle Paul's epistles. That is a privilege I have not had yet. But not only have you heard from me in the pulpit, but you have had Brain Milby, Greg Barnett, Andy Wisner, Brian Fourroux, Roger Fries and Jonathan Arnold all exposit the scriptures. We are being faithful in remaining in the word.

In terms of missions it has great year at Providence. If you were able to attend our 2016 missions banquet, then you are aware that currently our church budget is supporting three domestic church plants and six international missionaries. Providence has a direct presence on five different continents throughout the world with several focused on the all-important 10/40 window where the highest number of unengaged people groups reside. Once again, we sent a team to the Pacific Rim which marked our fifth trip to the region from the church. The progress we are seeing in this previously unreached area is unparalleled. Another team will be leaving us

for the 9,000 mile trek next month. They covet your prayers. In addition to this we have seen several of our members go out on short-term trips. Monika Carroll once again went to Ecuador, Nick Hammond went to Japan. Anna Pruitt served all over the south eastern part of the U.S. through summer camps. It is exciting to see our students catching the mission bug. And Beth Hammond reported to me that we had 52 shoe boxes that will be given out internationally through Samaritan's Purse.

Providence has also been effective domestically. This past summer Brian led the youth to work at the Rocket City mission. Instead of going great distances, they stayed home and worked with in the city of Huntsville alongside the Madison Baptist Association. This is an event we hope to again this summer. Brian has also be cultivating a relationship with the Downtown Rescue Mission. The youth will be helping with a Christmas evangelistic project turday. And Missions Ministry Team member Monika Carroll continues to lead our monthly work at Valley View Nursing Home and our sponsorship of the Good News Club at Legacy Elementary. Monika reported to us that they are serving 37 students weekly through that ministry. We continue to have ministry interviews on the first Sunday of the month highlighting local services such as the Gideons and Team Hope. And as you have heard, our new deacon of local ministries has plans for reaching those within our community. But overall, this past year the membership of Providence has given \$77,967.31 towards international and domestic missions. The ministry of proclamation at Providence is ever expanding from Huntsville to the ends of the earth.

With our second category of exaltation we are being diligent to maintain our worship within the boundaries of Biblical worship. It is very encouraging to be told by visitors that they appreciate our heart-felt worship toward God without being entertainment driven. One of our recent visitors from the Gideons commented on how much they loved seeing the word of God take precedence in our service. But worship has also been expressed through the commitments that people have made to join alongside us in our worship of God. This past year, Providence was pleased to baptize sixteen individuals. We also added five new families this year bringing our total number of families to 100. God has been gracious in expanding our family at Providence as we seek to glorify him.

In the final category of education, once gain our adult Sunday School ministry has been blessed. Our attendance records indicate that our Sunday School classes have been better attended than in previous years. It's not just the number of people that has increased, but also the

regularity of your attendance (meaning attendance isn't just high the first few weeks of the quarter but consistent throughout). We think that is a sign of the diligence of Mike Watson and the Teaching Ministry team. The teachers are meeting at least on a quarterly basis to talk over the surveys that you fill out and how we can do a better job of communicating Gods word for transformation. We have also added several new teachers. We are excited about these people contributing their gifts to the body.

Over the summer, our children's Vacation Bible School was a great success. Pam Giles and Kim Lott organized a wonderful week where the children studied the parables of Jesus. We may not have a huge attendance like some of the mega-churches in our area, but we certainly have quality. I was told by one visiting parent that they like our VBS than their own church's (which is one of the biggest) because their kids feel loved and receive special attention. But with just the few kids we had, they managed to raise over \$600 to purchase supplies in Ecuador. I would like to thank all of our workers in making Vacation Bible School a pleasure for the kids to attend.

Once again, we conducted our Church History Conference. Jonathan Arnold from Boyce College in Louisville, KY came to deliver a wonderful lecture on the Life and Ministry of John Owen. It has been rewarding to see several of you reading Owen's works since the conference. Next year, Michael Haykin will be with in October as we celebrate the 500th anniversary of Luther nailing his 95 thesis to the church doors in Wittenburg.

In regards to education, I would like to highlight just a few changes that have occurred this past year. First, we added a college and early career class to our Sunday School. Doug and Stefani Thomas have taken up the challenge of teaching this class. We ask that you pray for them as they lead this endeavor. It is difficult to maintain an intimate small group environment when students are in and out for the holidays, especially without a church presence on a particular college campus. But they are making it work and we appreciate their efforts. A second change is you will notice that we are striving to provide more opportunities for women. In Sunday School, Sue Carter will be teaching two classes in 2017 geared specifically toward women. Both Sue and Kathryn Eaton have split duties for the Ladies Bible Study; Sue teaches a Thursday morning class at the church and Kathryn teaches a Thursday evening class at her home. We are grateful for their hard work. And this is our first step in trying to encourage our ladies in their growth with the Lord. And third, last year we made you aware that one of our goals for 2016 was to

improve our children's ministry. To that end, we have recruited Ric and Giselle Crooks to be the new Children's Sunday School directors. You may not know it, but Giselle has a background in Education, including teaching in multicultural settings. Already, she has been evaluating what we are doing currently with our kids and together she and Ric are looking at what the possibilities are available for us in the near future. Our hope is to develop a comprehensive strategy to help our children and assist families in their growth together. They already have some great ideas to assist families. We will be looking forward to meeting with all of our children's workers and creating a solid vision to enhance children's and family ministries at Providence. In addition to these educational opportunities, our elders continue to disciple in small groups or one-on-one. We are also aware of several of you reaching out and discipling others. We are seeing fruit from the education branch of our vision statement.

So when we consider that we, as a church body, exists to declare the sovereign majesty of God through proclamation, exaltation and education, according to the revealed Word of God, to the ends of the earth, by His grace and for His glory', our congregation appears to be on solid footing. 2016 has been a very fruitful year indeed.

But to add to these things, allow me to report what our elders have been working on together as a group. It is only fair to reveal it has been a difficult year. Our small band of brothers has had its challenges within the last 11 months. We believe our church must be making progress because the enemy has made his presence known in our lives. The attacks have been frequent and have ranged from spiritual attacks on our family to personal health issues. At times we were reduced only to five elders to oversee the needs of 300. On top of that, each elder has had a significant struggle to battle. But we are not discouraged because we have seen that God has been carrying us through these encounters. Last month, your elders were finally able to get away for some retreat time together. While we talked about how we could serve you better, our primary focus was to assist each other in our own soul care. We prayed together, we cried together, we shared scripture with one another. It was a beautiful time for the Spirit to unite our hearts. And we are grateful to you for YOUR prayers for us and our families. Of course, our biggest struggle was the passing of our dear brother in Christ, Warren Harper. Warren had been an elder at Providence since its inception. And his 94 years of wisdom was invaluable to us. As the months have gone by since his passing, we have appreciated his service to our congregation more and more. He is greatly missed by each of us. I would like to thank Geneva and the family

for sharing him with us, even though I don't think he would have done it differently any other way. He wanted to serve this congregation to the very end. To honor his memory, the family has allowed us to produce the brief autobiography that Warren wrote. It is fascinating reading. You will learn how a man born the son of a farmer in Reform, Alabama became a member of the Von Braun team of scientist and a Godly father and husband. This booklet will be available in January of 2017.

If you noticed tonight, we only re-affirmed three elders tonight. Our dear brother, Ken Pruitt was led to withdraw his name from affirmation due to health concerns. However, it is our hope that the Lord will fully restore Ken's health and we once again have him back serving alongside us. His service was invaluable to our congregation and continues to be so. Ken is not only traveling with the team to Indonesia in January, he is also one of Sunday School teachers in our toddler class. At this time, we would like to thank him for his eight years of service to our church family as an elder.

To assist us with our task, we are also so grateful to our deacons. We have been able to fill two of our three positions. And one of our primary goals for 2017 is to assist Roger and Andrew to get their ministries off to a healthy beginning. We are thankful that their leadership will allow us to devote ourselves more to prayer and the ministry of the word. In addition to their help, we are also grateful for our new part-time secretary, Laura Hogue. Laura proved her value to us in her volunteer efforts and Brian and I are so thankful to have her work alongside of us. But I have to interject and remind our church body, Laura is a part-time worker. Her office hours will be Tuesday through Friday from 8:15-2:00. She will be happy to assist you during that time period. But I would like to ask you please not to encroach on her worship time with her family during the worship hours. Please respect that time. Not having Linda Barnett around these last few months was a lot harder than we thought. Which made us grateful for her as well. Brian and I would like personally to thank Linda for her two and a half years of service to the church. But I also want to thank the many volunteers who covered for Linda since she resigned. So many of you stepped up to answer phones, stuff envelope, make copies, un-lock doors and various other jobs around the church. Brian and I are particularly grateful to you. Perhaps a special thank you might be appropriate to Pam Clardy who, on a weekly basis, did battle with our copy machine quite valiantly as she prepared your worship bulletins.

But even with all these challenges and setbacks, the Lord has proven himself faithful. There still many issues which your elders have yet to address in 2017. We still need to work on developing ministry to the aging and their families. Warren's illness enlightened us greatly for our need in this area as we walked alongside him. We still need to energize our 50/50 program. While we have made significant progress (as you heard tonight) we still need to do better to prepare for our new education and fellowship space. The numerical growth in our church demonstrates the need - as we saw at our missions banquet last Sunday night and the fact that many of our adult classrooms are full. In 2017 we want to help our deacons succeed in ministry and we still need to select a deacon of benevolence. We also want to address a few other issues in our church constitution. We have done well in providing a biblical definition of gender and protecting ourselves from an outside body usurping the congregation's interpretation of our statement of faith, but we still have some minor details to work out. In addition to these, the elders plan on addressing the pastoral staff's job descriptions in order to protect them from burn-out and overload. Dennon Clardy has come up with a plan to facilitate better communication among the leadership of the body. We are looking forward to testing that in the near future. Also in 2017 two of our elders are working on leadership development in the congregation. It is our desire to recognize 'giftings' in others and get them into places where they can use their gifts. We hope you will join us in prayer as we seek to be faithful to the tasks God has called us toward. We also ask that you begin preparing yourselves spiritually for the upcoming year as we study the Thessalonian Correspondence. And perhaps you might already begin praying through Psalm 25, our Psalm of the Year.

2017 promises to be an exciting year for our church. Who knows? It might even be the year of our Lord's second advent. But either way, may the Lord find us faithful to the task of declaring his sovereign majesty through proclamation, exaltation and education, according to his revealed Word, to the ends of the earth, by His grace and for His glory'.